DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 341 457 PS 020 010

AUTHOR Jewett, Janet
TITLE School-Based Early Childhood Centers. The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory Program Report.
INSTITUTION Northwest Regional Educational Lab., Portland, OR. Child, Family, and Community Program.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Jul 91
CONTRACT RP91002001
NOTE 53p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Change Agents; *Child Development Centers; Classroom Environment; *Early Childhood Education; *Educational Quality; Family Programs; *High Risk Students; Leadership; *Program Descriptions; Public Schools; *School Community Programs; School Role; Staff Role
IDENTIFIERS Alaska; Facilitators; Idaho; Montana; Oregon; Quality Indicators; Washington

ABSTRACT

This report presents a research-based framework for identifying high-quality early childhood centers. Quality in a school-based early childhood center is identified by: (1) classroom parameters, including curriculum and adult-child interaction; (2) client parameters, relating to children, families, and communities; and (3) school structure parameters, including class size, adult-child ratio, students' age groupings, evaluation techniques, and staff qualifications and training. An overview of 23 early childhood centers in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, and Alaska is provided in tabular form, and regional trends in early childhood education are identified. Factors which facilitate improvement of early childhood practices in schools include state and district support, leadership of school principals, advocacy by staff, willingness of staff to change, and emergent needs of clients. Factors which inhibit improvement of early childhood practices include lack of state or district support, state legislation supporting counteracting policies, curriculum control by district committees, lack of resources, and staff resistance to change. Plans for facilitating future development of school-based early childhood centers are described. An appendix summarizes interviews with administrators at 30 early childhood centers in the 5 northwest region states. A list of 24 references is included. (BC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

THE Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

PROGRAM REPORT

ED341457

PS 020010

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☒ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

SCHOOL-BASED EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTERS

Janet Jewett

July 1991

Child, Family, and Community Program
Nancy Faires Conklin, Director

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Jerry D. Kirkpatrick
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
101 S.W. Main Street, Suite 500
Portland, Oregon 97204

Sponsored by OERI Office of Educational Research and Improvement U.S. Department of Education

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

This publication has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Education under contract number RP91002001. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

SCHOOL-BASED EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTERS

Janet Jewett

July 1991

Child, Family, and Community Program
Nancy Faires Conklin, Director

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
101 S.W. Main, Suite 500
Portland, Oregon 97204

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
I.	PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE	1
II.	IDENTIFIED NEED AND UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS	2
	Defining the Early Childhood Center	3
III.	RECOMMENDED QUALITY PARAMETERS FOR SCHOOL-BASED EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTERS: A RESEARCH SYNTHESIS	5
	Quality in Early Childhood Education	5
	Classroom Parameters	6
	Client-Centered Parameters	8
	School Structure Parameters	10
	Identifying Quality: "Dynamic" Use of Parameters	11
IV.	REGIONAL ASSESSMENT: MOVEMENT TOWARD EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTERS IN NORTHWEST SCHOOLS	12
	Summary Overview: Matrix of Regional Early Childhood Center Activity	12
	Regional Trends	22
	Facilitating and Inhibiting Factors	23
	Facilitators	23
	Inhibitors	27
V.	AUGMENTING QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTHWEST: NEXT STEPS	29
	Appendix	30
	References	48

I. PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE

This paper presents a research-based framework for identifying high quality early childhood centers. It draws upon the knowledge base and current literature about quality early childhood programs as well as a regional survey of actual practice and trends in early childhood center implementation.

This report, along with the synthesis of related research (Child, Family and Community Program, 1991), will guide the development of the Early Childhood Centers project. These reports will serve as a basis for selection of a set of exemplary school programs that are working to restructure their early childhood/early elementary services along developmentally appropriate and comprehensive service lines.

In cooperation with the expert practitioners in the sites selected, NWREL will work to assist in the creation and/or expansion of early childhood centers in public schools throughout the region by exploring practical barriers and bridges in:

- Implementing appropriate classroom practice;
- Creating strong transitions between early childhood programs across the community and the public schools;
- Identifying and implementing close links to other community organizations and agencies and interactive links with parents; and
- Developing policies that facilitate collaboration and restructuring.

Using the findings of the research synthesis and the practitioner interviews, a small group of promising sites will be selected from among schools interviewed here and subsequently. These will be visited by NWREL staff for direct classroom and community observation and more extensive exploration of the barriers and bridges to implementation of early childhood centers which they have encountered.

In the following section the identified need for this project as well as the underlying assumptions which have guided its formation are presented, including a definition of the early childhood center. The paper next identifies essential and typical parameters of quality early childhood programs. An emergent assessment of the activity already taking place in the region to develop early childhood centers follows, with characterization of specific programs based on targeted quality parameters. The paper concludes with a consideration of the next steps to be taken in applying the findings to project implementation.

II. IDENTIFIED NEED AND UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS

This project represents a response to strongly expressed regional need. Increasing numbers of at-risk children constitute a fundamental challenge to the success of schooling across the Northwest. Assistance with at-risk students constitutes the second most frequent set of requests in NWREL's needs identification work and its clients' requests on the FARs follow-up surveys, as reported in the 1989 Regional Needs Assessment (NWREL, 1989). The rising percentages of single parent and dual-parent working families have generated needs for extended care to which schools must respond. Flexible classroom models, early intervention, collaboration, and parent-community involvement are key strategies educators identify as desired responses to such needs. These needs are exacerbated in small, isolated settings where few community resources exist.

Early childhood education offers specific approaches and one opportunity for a coordinated response to such concerns. Historically, early childhood education is rooted in close home-community-school relations, integrated and coordinated programming, and strategies (supportive of early intervention) which have been designed to enable all children to develop, at their own speed, to their fullest potential. Quality early childhood education is beneficial to all children and families, as well as strengthening communities. In quality implementations, Head Start is one program which exemplifies these principles.

The specific entry point which this paper explores is the development of early childhood centers in public schools. Strengthening the relationships of early childhood programming to and installing effective practices from early childhood research in the public schools can facilitate development of an educational system which enhances responsiveness to a broad range of child and family needs. Professional organizations are currently recognizing the value of early childhood approaches and assumptions by endorsing the integration of early childhood practice into elementary school settings (Demmert, 1988; National Association of Elementary School Principals, 1990; National Association of State Boards of Education, 1989).

Although less well-recognized as a holistic set, innovative practices in elementary practice are emerging. They converge very effectively with concepts and techniques drawn from early childhood practice and suggest that schools are already showing strengths in this direction. The dynamic, contextualized and student-responsive concepts embedded in whole-language innovation; manipulative math programs; integrated, theme-based curricula; inventive spelling; creative writing/journaling programs; parent involvement; and cooperative learning techniques have proved effective with at-risk children and are closely related to early childhood strategies and assumptions. Our survey of regional trends indicates strong interest in and efforts toward the implementation of such practices. Recognizing the increasing need to serve diverse children and family structures and the importance of early intervention, schools are seeking to merge the best developmental practices with their early grades as well as to reach out to families. A partnership with early childhood programs and educators is a natural result. Schools which have sought out and incorporated these types of

approaches, then, represent particularly fertile ground for further exploration of early childhood programming.

Defining the "Early Childhood Center"

Education leaders in the Northwest have expressed strong interest in the concept of school-based early childhood centers. Defining features of such centers include: 1) Adherence to quality parameters based on child development principles and developmentally appropriate practice as these apply to children through the age of eight; 2) Active involvement and support of parents as partners in their child(ren)'s development; 3) Active involvement with and responsiveness to the resources and needs of the community; and 4) A school-based commitment to educating preschoolers in the community either on-site or in collaborative relationships with preschool care providers.

These features are common to current discussions of quality early childhood centers (Committee for Economic Development, 1991; NAESP, 1990; NASBE, 1989). Development of an educative environment which sensitively responds both to the known common developmental features and needs of children, families, and communities and to their unique characteristics and needs forms the foundation for the first three of these features, which are discussed in detail below in the section entitled Quality in Early Childhood Education.

The fourth feature, the concept of school-based commitment to the education of preschoolers is important to NWREL's definition of school based early childhood centers. Regional trends indicate that this commitment is real, but defined in flexible and diverse manners. One such trend is positively represented by strong links already being forged between previously established preschool programs and public schools in shared communities. Such links strengthen both school and preschool and reduce redundancy or competition in service provision as well as the stress of finding appropriate space, staff and resources when, in some areas, these are severely limited.

In such cases of collaborative relationships between school early childhood units and preschool programs, staff from both facilities work together regularly to share concerns and insights about children, provide a smooth transition for the child's as well as the family's progress from one level or site to another, and share community resources and staff development opportunities. Additionally, staff from both programs share in developing educational philosophies as well as instructional techniques, and feedback about children's progress in both sites is used to strengthen practice in each location.

Other relationships between preschools and elementary schools are being established as well. A number of schools report housing separately-administered preschools on the school campus, with varying levels of collaborative relationships operating. Some schools have developed and are administering their own preschool programs as a part of their early childhood centers.

Early childhood centers offer clear advantages to children, families, and the schools which incorporate them. Children benefit from early education which can maximize effective learning environments, school readiness, and opportunities for prevention of problems as well as early intervention where problems exist. Quality early childhood centers eliminate or at least minimize transition problems. Parent

involvement and partnership is established and commitments enhanced by early close connection with schools.

Schools can benefit, both whole-school structures as well as primary grades, when the foundations underlying quality early childhood programs come to enhance the school. Developmentally appropriate practice is a fundamental principle promoting an adapted, integrated approach in which children's needs and child/family/community concerns drive many aspects of curriculum determination and implementation.

Adopting a commitment to early childhood practices can often pave the way for or coincide with a commitment to school site decision making. Research provides evidence that the components discussed below strengthen educational quality and enhance the effectiveness of educational interventions for children.

In the best cases, curriculum models become more responsive, teaching flexibility is enhanced, teachers become more empowered, school structures tend to become more adaptable, groupings become less rigid, and decision-making is more widely shared between supervisors, teachers, parents, community, and children.

The rationale underlying this project, then, assumes that early childhood centers in public schools will benefit both the children and the schools they have been designed to serve. Research support for benefits of quality early childhood education for children is strong and compelling. The extent of its benefits for schools remains to be documented.

The goal of NWREL's early childhood centers project is to augment the already extant trend and expressed need for development of such centers across the region. Several assumptions underlie NWREL's approach. An already implied premise is that stronger relationships between early childhood and elementary structures and practices will be reciprocally beneficial. Additionally, it is assumed (and will subsequently be documented) that state structures, professional organizations, districts, and schools across the region are already demonstrating initiative, enthusiasm, and capabilities in the pursuit of this approach. Finally, an underlying belief is that NWREL can assist the process by 1) identifying and clarifying the characteristics that successful educators have already proven to be essential in establishing effective early childhood centers; 2) developing a cadre of experts in the theoretical rationale and practical implementation of early childhood centers; 3) developing training materials and dissemination techniques which will assist others in creating such centers throughout the region; and 4) identifying needs for policy support and revision.

III. RECOMMENDED QUALITY PARAMETERS FOR SCHOOL-BASED EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTERS: A RESEARCH SYNTHESIS

What do early childhood centers in schools look like? What kinds of parameters define an "early childhood center", as differentiated from an "elementary program"? The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) defines early childhood as the period from birth through age eight (NAEYC, 1987), arguing that children through (in some cases) third grade function developmentally in ways that are more consistent with the early childhood period than with children who are older and in a qualitatively different stage of development. The additional claim is made that effective quality programming for young children is based on developmentally appropriate practice in which the age-related and individual needs of children form the basis of programming and technique. This concept that the "early childhood" period requires qualitatively different techniques and approaches from the "elementary" period suggests that effective incorporation of early childhood programming into schools will require school restructuring and innovation. Thus, a careful consideration of the concept of incorporating early childhood programs into schools requires an examination of the quality components of early childhood education as they interface with the public school system.

Quality in Early Childhood Education

Not all preschool programs produce the desired effects of facilitating optimal development in young children. As Weikart states:

> A preschool classroom or child-care center is just another place for a child to be, unless the quality of the program is carefully defined and maintained. The positive effects of preschool programs apply only to high-quality child development programs (Weikart, 1989, p.18).

It is not enough for a school to house preschoolers on the grounds in order to ensure the benefits of quality early childhood education. Care must be given to the nature of a quality program for young children. Research has explicated some of the issues underlying quality care (Galinsky, 1989; Phillips, 1987). "Quality" proves to be a complex phenomenon. Weikart describes it as a "dynamic" concept of steadily focusing on the most efficient use of staff skills within a curriculum. NAEYC places quality within the context of developmentally appropriate practice. Phillips, et al., conclude that quality "may be most appropriately understood and studied as a blend or configuration of ingredients." What are some of these ingredients?

A review of recent research and policy statements about early childhood care and education suggests the existence of a considerable degree of consensus about the ingredients, or parameters, of quality early childhood programs, in or out of public schools. Commonly identified factors include:

- **Classroom Parameters** including: the nature of the curriculum; adult-child interaction

- **Client-Centered Parameters** including: needs of children; needs of families; community concerns

- **School Structure Parameters** including: class size and adult-child ratio; grouping practices; performance standards; modes of assessment and evaluation; staff qualification, training, and empowerment; site-based management and restructuring processes

These parameters, discussed in detail below, require that each educational context must adapt itself to the unique characteristics of all in-coming learners and must involve each child's family, community, and culture; the school staff and culture; and the broader community in a successful educational partnership process. These, then, become parameters which enter into a dynamic definition of quality. Thus, quality parameters extend beyond the classroom into important structural issues in schools such as grouping practices; class sizes and adult/child ratios; assessment and evaluation methods; staff qualifications and in-service training; knowledge building; leadership and advocacy roles of school personnel; relationships of schools to community agencies and businesses; and aspects of school restructuring.

Schools which have made a commitment to incorporating early childhood practices are likely, then, to demonstrate innovation not only in the incorporation of early childhood programs within the school, but in the incorporation of other, conceptually related innovative practices which have been posed as promising in the research, such as ungraded, mixed, blended or continuous classroom groupings in the primary grades; shifts in curriculum development toward school-based, integrated and holistic approaches; movement toward shared decision-making, community collaborations, and family community responsiveness; and other evidences of school restructuring processes. Such structural features in a school can be utilized both as indicators of successful efforts to move toward quality early childhood education and as desired outcomes of such efforts.

Following are identified parameters of appropriate early childhood/early elementary education grouped by the focal areas of classroom, client centeredness, and school structure.

Classroom Parameters

Curriculum:

Identified characteristics of quality early childhood classrooms include the following:

- A statement of educational philosophy (NAESP, 1990).

- A classroom format which fosters many opportunities for active, child-selected activities; choice opportunities and interest or learning centers are manifestations of this (Bredekamp, 1987; Weikart, 1989)

- Programming which is responsive to the age- and individual-appropriate needs of participants (Bredekamp, 1987; Demmert,

1989; Kagan, 1990; Morrison, 1990; NAESP, 1990; NASBE, 1988; Weikart, 1989)

- o A holistic, integrated approach to curriculum including theme-driven curriculum units (Bredekamp, 1987; Conklin, 1990; Demmert, 1989; NAESP, 1990)

- o Play as a significant opportunity during the program day (Bredekamp, 1987; Kagan, 1990)

- o Reflection of a language development focus and consideration of the importance of developing communicative competence as well as emergence of literacy and other school-related skills; whole language, inventive spelling, creative and journal writing programs represent early elementary facets of this approach. (Conklin, 1990, 1988; Cotton, 1988; Demmert, 1989).

- o Concrete, relevant, and inclusive programming which incorporates the child's life experiences. Familiar play and work materials (e.g., block and housekeeping corners with relevant tools and materials) field trips to community locales, and themes based on relevant interests and concerns are examples (Bredekamp, 1987; Conklin 1990, 1988; Cotton, 1988; Demmert, 1989).

- o Consideration of cultural diversity and nonsexist values through appropriate materials and activities (Bredekamp, 1987; Conklin, 1990, 1988; Cotton, 1988; Demmert, 1989; Governor's Interim Commission on Youth, 1988)

- o Balanced opportunities for children to interact with materials, peers and adults (Bredekamp, 1987; Conklin, 1990, 1988; Cotton, 1988; Galinsky, 1989; NAESP, 1990; Phillips, 1987).

Adult-Child Interaction:

Efforts to identify the quality components of early childhood classrooms frequently include a number of descriptors that emphasize the nature of children's opportunities to interact, particularly interact with adults (Bredekamp, 1987; Galinsky, 1989; Kagan, 1990; NAESP, 1990; Phillips, 1987). Galinsky (1989) identifies the relationship between the care provider and the child as the most important ingredient of quality, and others specifically mention the adult-child interaction as a primary classroom quality indicator . In particular, desirable adult-child interactions are described as:

- o attentive, responsive and facilitative;

- o accepting and enhancing of self esteem;

- o guiding and protective of the child's health and safety;

- o empowering of the child's development of self-control;

- o flexible;

- o communicative; and
- o based on skilled observation and assessment techniques.

Client-Centered Parameters

Research into the effects of early childhood education unanimously supports the assertion that the child must always be considered from within the context of a family. A definition of the client(s) of the school must include the child's family in the functional (as opposed to biological) sense of the word. Quality early childhood programs, then, are designed around and adaptively responsive to characteristics of learners and families. Such programs respond effectively to the styles and issues that children bring from home into the classroom and, equally importantly, reach out and engage parents or relevant caretakers and community members in various levels and aspects of school functioning. Identified "client-centered" parameters derived from the literature review include the following:

Children:

- o Important characteristics of children are considered in program design, e.g., special needs, linguistic and cultural differences, high risk factors (Bredekamp, 1987; Conklin, 1990, 1988; Cotton, 1988; Demmert, 1989; Galinsky, 1989; Kagan, 1990; Schorr, 1988).
- o Programming includes comprehensive care of health, nutrition, safety and extended care concerns for children (Bredekamp, 1987; Conklin, 1988; Cotton, 1988; Governor's Interim Commission on Children and Youth, 1988; Galinsky, 1989; Melaville, 1991; NAESP, 1990; NASBE, 1988; Schorr, 1988; Weikart, 1989).
- o The early childhood program is aware of and eases transitions which children must undergo (Bredekamp, 1989; Morrison, 1990; NAESP, 1990; NASBE, 1988; U.S. Departments of Education and Health, 1990, 1987).

Families:

The program identifies and supports parent needs by:

- o offering parent support and training;
- o including child care supports based on parent needs (e.g., before- and after- school care, child care for parent volunteers);
- o actively involving parents with their child's participation in the program;
- o actively involving parents in aspects of program functioning;
- o requiring parental input into the definition of the school's mission and purpose regarding children of all ages served by the school;

- o fostering communication and information exchange between parents and program;
- o establishing collaborative, equal relations between parents and program staff;
- o empowering parents to play key decision-making roles in school functions and management;
- o maintaining a balanced focus on the needs of both parents and children;
- o attending to and facilitating relevant transitions for parents and children; and
- o providing linkages to family and community support systems.

(Every source researched included some or all of the above parameters as significant components of quality early childhood programming.)

Communities:

- o The program takes a "case management" approach to the needs of children, families, and community members and works collaboratively with social service and community agencies to meet these needs in a comprehensive manner (Committee for Economic Development, 1991; Cotton, 1988; Demmert, 1989; Galinsky, 1989; Governor's Interim Commission on Children and Youth, 1988; Kagan, 1990; Melaville, 1991; NAESP, 1990; NASBE, 1988; Schorr, 1988; Weikart, 1989).
- o Community members and businesses are regarded as valuable resources which are drawn into program functions as formal or informal teachers and resource specialists and their input is sought out for determination of program goals and philosophy, as well as program support (Committee for Economic Development, 1991; Conklin, 1990, 1988; Cotton, 1988; David, 1990; Demmert, 1989; Galinsky, 1989; Gnezda, 1989; Governor's Interim Commission on Children and Youth, 1988; Kagan, 1990; Kunesh, 1990; NAESP, 1990; NASBE, 1988; Schorr, 1988).
- o The program embraces the diversity represented within the school structure and makes every effort to represent that diversity by affording children exposure to culturally and linguistically familiar role models and materials (Bredekamp, 1987, Conklin, 1990, 1988; Cotton, 1988; Demmert, 1989; Governor's Interim Commission on Children and Youth, 1988).
- o The program maintains a flow of communication into and out of the school structure concerning the needs of young children and their families. This communication particularly connects with available services within the community context (Bredekamp, 1987; David, 1990; Governor's Interim Commission on Children and Youth, 1988; NAESP, 1990).

School Structure Parameters

In addition to examining how classrooms function and what constitutes quality client-centered service, theory and research have identified characteristics of schools which are associated with quality programs for young children. These "structural" parameters both reflect and impact the implementation of quality early childhood education. Some are frequently identified as standards for accountability in schools or other programs. Frequently identified structural parameters include:

- **Small class size**: Studies recommend limiting elementary class sizes to 15 in public schools and stress small group sizes for preschool children (Cotton and Conklin, 1988; Demmert, 1989; Galinsky, 1989; Kagan, 1990; Phillips, 1987; Weikart, 1989)

- **Adult-child ratio**: Low adult-child ratios are a key indicator of quality early education. "An acceptable adult-child ratio for 4- and 5-year olds is 2 adults with no more than 20 children. Younger children require much smaller groups and adult-child ratios." (Bredekamp, 1987) (also, Demmert, 1989; Governor's Governor's Interim Commission on Children and Youth, 1988; Galinsky, 1989; Kagan, 1990; NAESP, 1990; NASBE, 1988; Phillips, 1987; Weikart, 1989).

- **Groupings within and among classrooms**: Young children's learning appears to be enhanced by mixed age exposures, cooperative learning, diversity, and peer tutoring (Bredekamp, 1987; Conklin, 1990, 1988; Cotton, 1988; Morrison, 1990; Phillips, 1987; Virginia Education Association and Appalachia Educational Laboratory, 1990).

- **Outcomes focus**: Establishing performance standards and monitoring the results of educational practice strengthen educational practice (Committee for Economic Development, 1991; Conklin, 1988; David, 1990; Melaville, 1991; NAESP, 1990; Weikart, 1989).

- **Evaluation and assessment techniques**: Incorporating multiple forms of data for assessing children's progress, and severely limiting the amount of and significance placed on standardized tests are signs of quality programs. Observation, teacher evaluation, and alternate forms of assessment are stressed as means of making key decisions about young children's progress (Bredekamp, 1987; Conklin, 1988; David, 1990; NAESP, 1990; Weikart, 1989).

- **Staff qualifications**: Standards are established and maintained for staff qualifications. Teachers should have demonstrated training in child development and early childhood education and prior supervisory experience with the age group for whom they are responsible. (Bredekamp, 1987; Governor's Interim Commission on Children and Youth, 1988; Galinsky, 1989; Gnezda, 1989; NAESP, 1990; Phillips, 1987; Schorr, 1988; Weikart, 1989).

- **Staff training**: On-going staff training and in-service regarding early childhood knowledge bases and techniques should be a regular program feature, for both early childhood and elementary staff. Teachers are empowered to work collaboratively and flexibly to attain program goals. (Bredekamp, 1987; Conklin, 1988; Cotton, 1988; Galinsky, 1989; Morrison, 1990; NAESP, 1990; NASBE, 1988; Schorr, 1988; Weikart, 1989).

- **Site-based decisionmaking**: The school itself demonstrates restructuring efforts which afford greater flexibility, collaboration with other community agencies and with clients; promotes integration and articulation between early childhood and elementary programs; serves a broadening definition of service; provides opportunities to forge links which facilitate transitions and service within the school and among other agencies; and exerts leadership in the school and community to advocate for early childhood programming and service. (CED, 1990; Conklin, 1988; David, 1990; Governor's Interim Commission on Children and Youth, 1988; Kagan, 1990; Melaville, 1991; NAESP, 1990; NASBE, 1988; Schorr, 1988).

Identifying Quality: "Dynamic" Use of Parameters

"Parameters" is used here to represent boundaries identifying the range of contexts within which an occurrence can take place. Quality early childhood centers in schools will necessarily represent a range of characteristics which have been adapted to the unique needs of the children, families, communities, and school structures in which they are formulated. These parameters, then, will be used to set a standard for quality which identifies critical factors in the provision of quality education to young children. They are not intended to conflict with the responsibility of each center to develop a quality program which responds to the particular needs of its client population.

In her discussion of excellence in education, Kagan (1990) critiques a "model program" approach to early childhood education and suggests instead that system reform focus on discerning and disseminating "the essential elements and principles" of excellence. Defining parameters within which "quality" programs function represents one approach to this task. However, program features such as innovative grouping practices, curriculum descriptors, or other parameters may be implemented in ways which do not successfully capture the essential issues of quality early childhood education. It is also necessary to examine the ways in which programs are implemented in order to identify quality.

Common descriptors occur across the literature discussing quality in early childhood education, descriptors which are used to describe teacher/child relationships, parent involvement, staff roles, and school restructuring. Those most frequently occurring include the terms "interaction", "communication", "flexibility" and "empowerment". Thus, schools which function flexibly, promote and enhance interaction, communication and empowerment among people and groups connected with the school are programs which are likely to provide quality support, care, and education to the young children and families they serve.

IV. REGIONAL ASSESSMENT: MOVEMENT TOWARD EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTERS IN NORTHWEST SCHOOLS

NWREL has used the above parameters in conjunction with the previously described assumptions to identify promising sites on which to build a regional improvement effort. NWREL's procedure has been to contact state department of education elementary specialists and state professional association representatives seeking recommendations for sites that demonstrate promising early childhood parameters. These professionals responded with enthusiasm for and awareness of the innovative practices under their supervision. Quality early childhood and early elementary practices are being recognized and carefully monitored by these leaders. This approach to identification of sites builds on the assumption that NWREL should recognize and augment the skilled leadership systems already in place throughout the region, rather than attempting to supplant or replace them.

A number of such sites in each of NWREL's five states have been contacted and are described in brief overviews appended to this paper. Principals and teachers were interviewed according to a protocol which covers the above-listed parameters as a way of determining the key features of each unique setting in a manner informed by the knowledge base. Overviews of the findings emerging from the ongoing interviews with Northwest region educators offer insight into the range and variety of practices that are currently being developed and implemented.

Summary Overviews: Matrix of Regional Early Childhood Center Activity

Information from these interviews is summarized in Figure 1 which is presented below. In the Figure 1 matrix, information about each school is presented in vertical columns. The information regarding each parameter which can be encapsulated briefly is listed horizontally. When information was provided during the interview in a clear reference to a particular parameter, such as concern with assessment and evaluation methods, it is referenced with a one or two word statement or an X. A minus or plus indicates either the school's minimal or exceptional effort or concern in that area.

As can be seen from examining this matrix, the surveyed schools vary widely according to school structure, population characteristics, type, and size. Nine schools serve pre-kindergartners on campus through a variety of different types of programs, while other schools are preparing to do so. Different constellations of early childhood related activity are also evident. Some schools have focused on curriculum innovations and may also be concerned with altering assessment and evaluation techniques, others demonstrate involvement primarily in parent support and communication and/or through community collaborations. The resources which schools report as being influential, and the barriers described, also vary widely across the survey. This overview suggests that several

Figure 1: Characteristics of Selected Schools

Parameters:	Schools			
	Boise-Elliot	Haines	John Campbell	Kalispell District
Community type	urban, low income	fishing, logging small	agricultural, suburban	middle class
School size and structure	785, preK-5	400, K-12	900, PreK-2	400, K-12
Minority population	46% Afro-American 8% Minority	25% Native	2-3% Minority	-
Groupings	working toward ungraded	some overflow, combined grades	ungraded, K-1 blends	transitional 1st grade/readiness kindergarten
Class configuration	1:17	1:13	1:20	?
Resources	ASCD study and district support	restructuring consultant on staff	college, PTA and district support	district support
Restructuring	X	X+	X	-
Pre K programming	X+	working toward	X	none
Kindergarten	full day	?	half day	half day
Goals in place	X	X	X	X
Philosophy in place	?		X	?
Curriculum:				
activity based	X		X	
whole language	X		X	
integrated/project approach	X			
developmentally appropriate practice	X		X	
Children:				
high risk	X		X	X
special needs	X		X	
diversity	X+			
language				
Parents:				
support	X		X	
involvement	X		X	X
decision making	X	X	X	
communication	X		X	
Community:				
business involvement	X+			
agency relationships	X		X	X
community representation	X			
transition programs			X-	
Child evaluation/assessment	X	X+	X	
Staff:				
in-service training				
empowerment		X+		
Duration of efforts	8 yrs	1 1/2	4 yrs	8 yrs
Barriers:				
facilities				
staff qualification		X		
resources				X
isolation				
policy				

Figure 1 (continued)

Parameters:	Schools			
	Lincoln McKinley	Mary Harrison	Nez Perce	Nome
Community type	agricultural low income	rural, low income	agricultural small	isolated
School size and structure	365, K-5	250, K-2	106, K-6	465, K-6
Minority population	30% Native	4% Minority	4% Native	80% Native
Groupings	-	working towards ungraded	-	X
Class configuration	1:21	1:25	1:16	?
Resources	district support	district and Chapter 1 support		state EC project
Restructuring	-	X		X+
Pre K programming	special needs	X	special needs go to other schools	none
Kindergarten	half day language kindergarten	half day	?	half day
Goals in place	X	X	-	X
Philosophy in place	?	X	X	X
Curriculum:				
activity based	X	X	X	X
whole language	X	X	X	
integrated/project approach	X	X	X	?
developmentally appropriate practice	X	X		X
Children:				
high risk	X	X		X
special needs	X	X	X	X
diversity	X			X
language	X	X		X
Parents:				
support	after school tutoring	X		
involvement		X	X	X
decision making	?			X
communication	X	X+	X	X
Community:				
business involvement	X	X-		
agency relationships	X	X+		X+
community representation		X		X+
transition programs		X		X+
Child evaluation/assessment	X	X	X-	X+
Staff:				
in-service training	X	X		X+
empowerment	X	X		X+
Duration of efforts	?	3 yrs	2 yrs	2 yrs
Barriers:				
facilities				
staff qualifications				
resources				X
isolation				X
policy				

Figure 1 (continued)

Parameters:	Schools			
	Rosamond-Weller	Sears	South Colby	Thirkill
Community type	rural, low-high income	oil based, tourist community	semi-rural	industry, middle income
School size and structure	697, K-6	475, K-2	445, K-6	300, K-2
Minority population	20% Native	15% Pacific Island 20% Native	-	-
Groupings	-	Joplin plan in 2nd grade	moving toward ungraded	ungraded 2nd year classes
Class configuration	1:22 1:10 reading	1:23	1:24	?
Resources	state restructuring project	in-service grant, EC pilot project	state grants, AWSP, NAESP	Project Leader-
Restructuring	X+	X	X	-
Pre K programming	none	special needs	-	special needs
Kindergarten	half day/extended day	half day	half day	half day
Goals in place	X	X	X	X
Philosophy in place	X-	X	?	X
Curriculum:				
activity based	X	X	X	
whole language	X	X	X	X-
integrated/project approach	X	X		
developmentally appropriate practice		X	X	
Children:				
high risk			X-	
special needs				
diversity	X	X		
language	-	-		
Parents:				
support	school care	X		
involvement	X+	X	X+	X+
decision making	X-		X	
communication				X+
Community:				
business involvement	X	X		X+
agency relationships	X	X		X
community representation	X+			
transition programs	X		X-	
Child evaluation/assessment	X	X+	X	
Staff:				
in-service training	X		X	X+
empowerment	X+	X+	X+	X+
Duration of efforts	4 yrs	2 yrs	3 yrs	1 yr ?
Barriers:				
facilities	X			
staff qualifications				X
resources				
isolation			X	
policy	X		X	

Figure 1 (continued)

Parameters:	Schools: Wilcox	Bonney Lake	Ponderosa	Walker
Community type	urban, mid-low	rural/bedroom community	urban/working class	low to middle income small college town
School size and structure	750, K-6	630, PreK-6	370, PreK-6	370, PreK-5
Minority population	-	less than 10%	diverse mix - Native, Afro-American, Hispanic, Asian	-
Groupings	-	-	cross-class groupings for immersion activities	many mixed age groupings, blends, continuation classes, cross-class collaborations
Class configuration	low 20's	K = 1:20 1,2 = 1:25	PreK = 1:12 K-2 = low 20's	K-2 = 1:21 3-5 = 1:24
Resources	NAESP, Onward to Excellence	district support	business partnerships, parents, staff	grants, district support, community support
Restructuring	-	district doing site-based management training	district moving towards	X
Pre K programming	?	special ed.	special ed	
Kindergarten		2 1/2 days/week	1/2 day	1/2 day
Goals in place	X-	X	X	X
Philosophy in place	X	needs change		
Curriculum:				
activity based	X-	at K level not 1st or 2nd	X	X
whole language		X	X	X
integrated/project approach		X	X	X
developmentally appropriate practice	X	X	X	X
Children:				
high risk		25%	30%	
special needs		10%	X	
diversity			X	
language			X	
Parents:				
support	breakfast program	-	X	adding before and after school care
involvement	X	X+	X	X+
decision making	X	X+	X	X
communication		X+	X+	X+
Community:				
business involvement	X-		X+	X+
agency relationships	X-	X-	X	X+
community representation				X+
transition programs	X-	X-	X-	X+
Child evaluation/assessment	X+		X+	X

Figure 1 (continued)

Parameters:	Schools			
	Wilcox	Bonney Lake	Ponderosa	Walker
Staff:				
in-service training	X+	X	X	X
empowerment	X+	X	X	X
Duration of efforts	2 yrs	1 yr	5 yrs	8 yrs
Barriers:				
facilities			X	
staff qualification	X	lack of knowledge		staff burnout
resources				X
isolation		X		
policy		X		

Figure 1 (continued)

Parameters:	Schools: Brattain	Carlton	Hathaway	Patrick
Community type	urban, low SES, high turnover	rural, low income	small town, wide SES range	small town, low SES, high transcience
School size and structure	275, K-5	420, preK-8	420, preK-2	340, K-5
Minority population	5% Native 5% Hispanic 3% Afro-American	8% Hispanic	1% other	Small % migrant Hispanics
Groupings	grade level	grade level	multiage and grade level	grade level, lunch multiage, family grouping
Class configuration	1:17 K/1	1:18-21	1:9 PALS program 1:20 non-PALS	1:26
Resources	Chapter 1 school-wide grants, state DOE	Fred Meyer grant, community and district support	Early release/district-wide, district commitment to blending categorical funds, early intervention funds	20/20 grant, staff/district support
Restructuring		X-	X	X
Pre K programming		X	ECEAP, Head Start, Day care, special ed	coming next year
Kindergarten	half day	half day	half day	half day
Goals in place	X	X	X	X
Philosophy in place	X		X	
Curriculum:				
activity based	X	X	X	X-
whole language	X-	X-	X	-
integrated/project approach	X			-
developmentally appropriate practice	X	X		
Children:				
high risk	X	X	X	X
special needs	X	X	X	X
diversity				
language	X			
Parents:				
support	X	X	X	X
involvement	X	X	X	X
decision making	-	-		-
communication	X	X	X	X
Community:				
business involvement	X	X		
agency relationships	X	-	X	X
community representation	X	-	X	X
transition programs	X-	X	X	X+
Child evaluation/assessment	X-	X	X	
Staff:				
in-service training	X	X	X	X
empowerment	X	X		?

Figure 1 (continued)

Parameters:	Schools			
	Brattain	Carlton	Hathaway	Patrick
Duration of efforts	2	3	1	4
Barriers:				
facilities	X			
staff qualification				
resources		X	X-time	X
isolation				
policy	X			
population				X

Figure 1 (continued)

Parameters:	Schools		
	Richmond	Tendoy	Vaughn
Community type	urban, poverty school, high transcience, bilingual	middle income, all caucasian	rural Chapter 1 schoolwide
School size and structure	490, K-6	380, K-6	400, K-5
Minority population	50% Hispanic 50% Caucasian	2% Native American 3% Vietnamese	10% black, Native American
Groupings	grade level	grade level	multiage and grade level
Class configuration	1:20-28	1:25	1:20-25
Resources	Chapter 1 school-wide, Kiwanis, LAC, state DOE	some district support, local AEYC, state language arts, OTE	whole language, adoption in BC, Canada, ASCD training, teacher visits
Restructuring	X-	X	X
Pre K programming			X- ECEAP, parent coop
Kindergarten	half day	half day	half day
Goals in place	X	X	X
Philosophy in place	X	X	
Curriculum:			
activity based	X	X	X
whole language	X		X+
integrated/project approach			
developmentally appropriate practice	X+	X	
Children:			
high risk	X		
special needs	X	X	
diversity	X		
language	X		
Parents:			
support	X		X
involvement	X	X	
decision making	X	X	
communication	X	X	
Community:			
business involvement	X	X	
agency relationships	X	X	
community representation	X	X	
transition programs	-	X	
Child evaluation/assessment		-	X
Staff:			
in-service training	X	X	X
empowerment	X	X	

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Figure 1 (continued)

Parameters:	Schools		
	Richmond	Tendoy	Vaughn
Duration of efforts	3	3	1
Barriers:			
facilities			
staff qualification			X
resources	X	X-time	
isolation			
policy		X-district level	
population	X	X	

0331c

trends are converging to bolster the movement towards integration of early childhood practices in public schools.

The remainder of this paper will examine regional trends supporting early childhood activity and discuss the facilitating as well as inhibiting factors influencing progress. In addition, the next steps in the process of augmenting the development of early childhood centers in Northwest schools will be described.

Regional Trends

As this matrix indicates, considerable evidence exists to document strong regional interest in early childhood-related techniques, strategies and services. Movement towards integration of early childhood methods, then, represents a critical key trend throughout the region. The collected material also reveals a variety of differences among schools in the type and scope of their involvement with early childhood activity. Thus, as the figure shows, both the points of initiation in early childhood education restructuring and reform and the extent of implementation of these innovations varies widely among the schools in the region actively working on improvement for young children. Key trends, and a discussion of the facilitating and inhibiting factors that have influenced the development of these trends, follows.

- Local school- or district-level initiation of reform in all states, with varying assistance and guidance by state education agencies and other school improvement organizations;

- Complementary emergent policy-level interest and initiatives;

- Initiation of reform emerging from a variety of sources: participation in national or regional professional symposia, assistance from school improvement organizations (e.g., the state education agency, NWREL), community interest or demand, staff recognition of the need to improve student performance;

- Correlation between reform of early childhood education and participation by schools in some form of a school improvement/building-based management process;

- Recognition of the value of developmentally appropriate practices for all children, but especially for at-risk children;

- Strong regional interest in curriculum reform which includes efforts toward ungraded or mixed age groupings, whole language implementation, and other manifestations of developmentally-appropriate practice;

- Expansion of services to developmentally-delayed children in all states, in accord with new federal program standards; use of these programs for under-five-year-olds by some districts as springboards to extension of education services to a broader base of young children;

- Development of state-funded pre-kindergartners for low socioeconomic children in some states and interest in all states, together with increased coordination with Head Start programs in some communities;
- Emergence of coordination and collaboration with human service agencies and private and community organizations, as a starting point in some schools and as a later emerging goal in others;
- Participation of parents in early childhood programs as a challenging aspect of early childhood reform for schools;
- Increasing willingness to work with and learn from preschool providers such as the local Head Start to facilitate this effort;
- Recognition of transition from preschool/home to public school as an area for careful development; increased interest in Head Start/preschool coordination with public school; and
- Commonality of inhibiting factors which include facilities limitations, needs for increased staff development, and limited social services and other resource supports, especially in remote communities.

These findings clearly indicate that Northwest educators are deeply concerned about the readiness of young children and the need to reach out to families and communities as indicated in NWREL's initial assessment of regional needs. In addition, many are taking active steps in restructuring education toward prevention, rather than remediation, and toward comprehensive approaches to meet the needs of all, but in particular, at-risk youngsters.

Facilitating and Inhibiting Factors

Facilitators

An analysis of the interviews reveals some key factors which have played a powerful role in facilitating the process of incorporating early childhood practices as school personnel have described it. These key factors follow.

State and district leadership/support. In many cases, principals and staff credited state and/or district levels of support for generating productive change at their school. State-sponsored guidelines for restructuring around early childhood services or grant opportunities for school improvement; district-sponsored curriculum guidelines or staff development thrusts; the encouragement and support of leadership, usually at the superintendency level, for programs to explore and experiment with unique program developments; and local committees and taskforces to examine policy and implementation issues were frequently cited factors in the generation and support of school change. In most cases, these factors offered principals as well as staff the incentive and direction for change, while in some cases the willingness and flexibility at the district leadership level to allow the principal to pursue a chosen vision was a significant factor. Two examples will illustrate:

- Alaska's Department of Education sponsored a statewide early childhood restructuring project. The schools which participated produced major changes in early childhood efforts.

- A curriculum coordinator in Idaho bought copies of NAEYC's Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) for every kindergarten teacher and principal in the district, and arranged to offer courses for credit to study DAP.

Leadership efforts on the principal's part. Principals often provide vision and resources as well as motivation for staff to explore new techniques, options, and programs. In some interview examples, the principal went ahead with the pursuit of early childhood centers in spite of disinterest on the part of the local leadership. In many cases, the principal described a process in which their professional goals became shared with the staff, who adopted the principal's vision and began experimenting with implementation. Examples are:

- A Washington principal determined that ungraded primaries were the best way to respond to the needs of the population in the area. He convinced his school community to take the risk and is now implementing ungraded practices in another school in the district.

- Describing herself as a "success oriented person who points out the best that others are doing", a principal in Montana says that the change in her school started when she arrived because "the seeds were there, I fertilized them and provided an atmosphere where they could grow."

Professionalizing experiences of principals. Some principals reported that they had important experiences or contacts which opened their eyes and gave them additional resources to share with their staff. Professional opportunities (e.g., activities of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and NAESP; special programs such as NWREL's Onward to Excellence; and regional and local conferences in curriculum areas such as whole language or in early childhood education) were frequently mentioned as having had a significant and direct impact on the principals' assumptions and goals, as well as an indirect impact on the staff through dissemination by the principals. Major changes in classroom practice and school structure were ascribed to this influence. Examples are:

- Married to a kindergarten teacher, one Idaho principal took a European trip and visited Swiss schools with his wife. Impressed by the competence of the sixth graders he saw there in conjunction with the developmental early elementary classes, he is rethinking his assumptions and pursuing developmentally appropriate practice in his school.

- Concerned about the lack of motivation to apply their skills demonstrated by his school's academically successful students, a Washington principal was asked to participate in a practitioners' workshop at the state level and a national science committee on retention by NAESP. As he channeled the materials he was acquiring and reading to the staff, "they said *AHA*!" and got state

grants to pursue a reorganization towards developing early childhood programming.

Staff leadership and advocacy. In a number of cases, principals and other leaders explain that they have had to respond to the strong efforts of competent professional staff who have pushed them and their schools to stay abreast of current trends. Often, staff members bring particular forms of expertise into the school community and communicate it to others. Kindergarten staff were frequently described by respondents as assuming this role, probably because of the pivotal role of the kindergarten teacher in serving as young children's bridge between preschool and early elementary programs. Examples are:

- A twenty-year veteran kindergarten teacher has struggled across the years to get her school staff to pay more attention to early childhood practice. When the school began to reexamine retention practices and assumptions, they began to listen to her and have now begun to aggressively pursue early childhood education.

- One principal in Alaska credits his early childhood staff for developing a "strong advocacy force" so that program maintenance was not left to the principal.

Staff professionalization activities. Frequently, principals indicate that staff are significantly influenced by professional conferences and opportunities to see and assess practice outside their school walls. Staff attendance at national professional conferences, graduate level coursework, and representation on state or district level committees were vehicles which were mentioned as means for new ideas and change incentives to enter the school. Opportunities to see innovative techniques and approaches in practice were also mentioned as strong influences on staff incentive to change. Examples are:

- The special education staff in a Montana district completely revamped its program after attending nation-wide conferences that examined the cutting edge in provision of special services. They are now working to integrate their program with the local Head Start.

- A large early childhood unit which traditionally offered a variety of curriculum options has, over the past five years, become committed to early childhood and developmentally-appropriate practice as the curriculum coalesced in response to the integration of whole language, theme-based teaching, and innovations which convinced the entire staff that this was "the right way to go".

Staff willingness to change. Principals report that successful innovation in their school has been a direct result of staff flexibility and willingness to take risks. Motivated staff are willing to experiment with new techniques and monitor their effectiveness. Frequently, program innovation requires a significant outlay of additional time and effort, and the redistribution of resources and skills which, in the most successful cases, teachers embrace. Examples are:

- One low-income school in Oregon is restructuring its schedule starting with the lunch program. Each staff member will be assigned a mixed-age family grouping of 14 children and will eat lunch with

them daily for the entire year. The staff is discussing adding a "social skills training" component to the lunch program, as well.

- A Chapter 1 school in Idaho has reassigned all support staff so that the teacher-child ratio for basic academics can be as low as possible. All staff in the building are now expected to assist in reading and math groups for a certain amount of time every day.

Staff study and evaluation activity. Professionals in the field frequently describe changes as having emanated from the commitment of staff to studying, assessing, and refining the effectiveness of their techniques in working with young children and their families. Examples are:

- A staff in a rural Oregon community decided to focus on parent involvement and formed a program to visit all children in their homes twice yearly. When parents resisted being seen at home the first year, staff arranged to visit in local restaurants. This year, 95 percent of families have invited staff into their homes.

- One Alaskan school staff formulated goals for school progress, developed a checklist of their accomplishments, and monitored their progress. After arranging in-service sessions from experts across the nation in the past years, this year they developed and staffed their own in-service sessions based on their self assessment.

Emergent needs of clients. Change often results from professional recognition of unmet needs of children and/or families. Examples are:

- A school which participated in the Alaskan early childhood restructuring project identified need for extended care as part of its community assessment and involvement process. This school is now working to overcome district level barriers to extended care by designing innovative programs in order to provide full-day kindergarten and extended school-age care to children in the community.

- A rural school, unsuccessful at getting the local Head Start program to collaborate with them, established its own preschool intervention program as a result of concern over the increasing numbers of special-needs and language-delayed children entering the school over the past years.

Our analysis of these factors suggests that early childhood-related school change can result from a number of points of impact, including "top down" influences that come from broader administrative leadership and policy guidelines, and "bottom-up" influences in which child/family need or teacher interests drive movement towards change. Probably the most successful innovations arise when both types of influences are congruent in pointing the school towards change. Regional efforts can have impact through leadership and policy influences as well as through needs analysis and staff professionalization.

Inhibitors

Some factors can act as real impediments to the process of change as schools pursue implementation of early childhood goals and methods. Barriers described in the process of the regional survey follow.

Lack of state or district support for the goals underlying a proposed change. In some cases, schools become ready to make changes which the district or local political leadership is unwilling or reluctant to support. Example:

- A school in an isolated rural single-school district identified increasing numbers of children entering with language delay and other special needs and worked hard to acquire the resources to add a preschool program. After obtaining a modest grant for start-up costs, they were nearly forced to turn it down because the school board was very reluctant to begin providing early childhood services.

State legislation which supports counteracting policies. In many cases, different levels or concerns of established policies can conflict with efforts to develop early childhood practices which are responsive and flexible. For example:

- A school attempting to implement more developmentally appropriate practice wanted to purchase blocks for the early childhood classrooms. The state, however, has mandated textbook adoption processes which require all schools to provide books for each child in each subject at each grade level. This school needed the assistant of a state board of education consultant to justify the purchase of blocks as a textbook alternative.

Organization and control of district curriculum committees. In some school systems, the curriculum is managed by staff or committees that lack familiarity with early childhood assumptions and practices. Adoption policies, which can be state or district mandated, can control the kinds of resources to which teachers have access. Rigid adherence to a mode of equipping, documenting and implementing curriculum can impede the development of quality early childhood practices, as in the following example:

- As a kindergarten teacher attempted to encourage the rest of the teaching staff in her school to explore integrated themes and whole language approaches, the rest of the staff expressed reluctance to do so because of the curriculum guidelines implemented and monitored throughout the district. It was hard for the staff to see how they could teach in broader,integrated units and still remain accountable for successful teaching in each subject area when the standard guidelines for identifying progress were tied to specific criteria categorized and evaluated by worksheet performance in each textbook-driven subject area.

Lack of resources: time, facilities, or funds. In many cases, principals expressed frustration over the limitations imposed on the progress of the school by a lack of space, time, or financial resources. Programs are unable to add

preschool classrooms or offer extended care when no space is available, and class sizes frequently suffer from this constraint as well. Staff efforts to develop new staffing patterns around ungraded primaries or integrated services can be impeded when they lack time to meet and coordinate major program changes. Staff development is hampered by lack of funds for in-service opportunities - both for the time to take off from classroom responsibilities to discuss and plan, and to hire presenters who can offer new training opportunities. Example:

- One school which serves a low income high risk population is unable to provide the needed at risk preschool program because of an overcrowded building and lack of funds. In addition, the school staff are convinced of the client population's need for summer school carryover services but again, the lack of funds prohibits provision of such preventative services.

Staff resistance to change. Several principals mentioned the reluctance to experiment with new techniques as well as lack of knowledge about early childhood approaches and assumptions on the part of some of their staff as serious impediments to their school's progress. Resistant staff can slow down the change process and reduce its successful impact on the school population. For example:

- A principal who is attempting to lead his school to becoming an ungraded primary has been hampered by the fact that several staff members are unwilling to work in a multiage classroom. The staff becomes split between those who do and those who don't, which affects the way the staff functions as a whole and prevents the possibility of offering a consistent ungraded school structure.

Some of these facilitating and inhibiting factors are more accessible than others from an outside source such as NWREL and therefore represent the most efficient "points of impact" for our focus in assisting the process of change. State leadership, district support and legislative policy can be informed by policy analysis and guidelines as well as leadership training. Opportunities for professional development of principals and teachers can be directly impacted through training and networking, as can enhanced familiarization with study of evaluation techniques and an outcomes focus. NWREL can also assist in providing resources for analyzing child/family needs and those community or regional resources which may help or hinder progress. These are all points of impact to which analysis and technical assistance on the part of NWREL can make systematic and potentially significant contributions. Evaluation of success of these efforts represents another target of interest. How are and how should schools be evaluating their own changes? A basis for identification of monitoring methods and data collection to assess outcomes will be a crucial foundation for the successful dissemination of findings and extension of practices.

V. AUGMENTING QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTHWEST: NEXT STEPS

Clearly, expertise is already being demonstrated at the school, district, professional support, and state levels in the pursuit of the concerns of this project. Sites have implemented various parameters of quality early childhood programming in ways which are uniquely adapted to the needs of the particular community, families, and children being served. Resourceful educators have promoted educational vision and quality practices around early childhood and early elementary concerns with ingenuity, enthusiasm, persistence, and professional competence.

NWREL's Early Childhood Centers project will draw on such demonstrated expertise in order to examine the characteristics which have facilitated successful site development progress and to attempt to distill and articulate these characteristics in ways which can then be used to augment the progress of others. In the pursuit of this goal, a small number of sites will be selected, based on data collected from the interview process, to observe, monitor and more closely study in the coming year. Indicators of those schools which have advanced well in implementing parameters identified by the research synthesis will be used to identify sites for closer observation of actual classroom practice. A balanced selection of sites throughout the region found to be demonstrating quality parameters will be derived for case study analysis. Creating a group which reflects diversity of expertise and issues will be an important aspect of this process.

Site visits, phone interviews, and convening of participants will characterize facets of this case study approach. In the coming year, these staff of a small number of sites will work directly with NWREL staff to develop and articulate a collective concept of the critical defining features of the early childhood center concept, as well as guidelines for those forms of technical assistance which would be helpful to other schools embarking on similar paths. Analysis of the points of impact identified as maximally effective by the practitioner group and analysis and design of recommendations and materials for use within each targeted area will be key pursuits. The culmination of this phase of the project will be an analysis which outlines effective strategies for planning, developing, implementing, and evaluating early childhood centers in the region.

This analysis, in turn, will guide NWREL's supportive intervention with a larger cohort or districts and schools who are in the planning or early implementation stages of their early childhood center projects. Out of these experiences, NWREL, together with a cadre of expert professionals identified in the course of the work, will develop materials and methods for training, evaluation and technical assistance delivery to schools and districts throughout the region in subsequent years of the project. Given the level of interest and expressed need, this should be a dynamic and collaboratively engaging process.

APPENDIX

Summaries of Site Interviews

Boise/Eliot School
Betty Campbell, Principal
Portland, Oregon

A pre-K-5 school which serves 785 students, Boise/Eliot was considered an early childhood school 26 years ago with a Head Start Follow-Through project. The school population is 46 percent African American and 46 percent Caucasian, 51 percent free or reduced lunch eligible,and has a 24 percent mobility rate. Three pre-kindergarten classrooms serve four-year-olds half day, and seven sections of kindergarten offer full-day programs. Class staff:student ratios average 1:17, except for preschool, in which two teachers work with 20 children. Boise/Eliot is a magnet school which draws from all over the city. Current goals include: 1) study and implementation of multiage groupings; 2) refinement of learning style studies and implementation; and 3) development as a cooperative school based on the model by the Johnson and Johnson book. The school stresses hands-on learning and a language-based curriculum. Cross-grade dialogue, classroom pairings, and tutoring are stressed. Resources include a strong staff with early childhood expertise and participation in the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) early childhood consortium. Families bring many problems to the school, including substance abuse, neglect, physical and sexual abuse, crime, and imprisonment. Ties are close with Children's Services Division, Juvenile Court, neighborhood associations, realtors, and mental health clinics. The many business partnerships established by the school include relationships with U.S.West, the Trailblazers, and Nabisco. Parent involvement is high, with 8,000 volunteer hours logged last year. An innovative program which offers free day care to parents who wish to volunteer during school hours has been widely used. Community members are drawn into a mentor/tutor program for the lowest performing children. Parents serve on the budget review committee, the local school advisory committee, hiring committees, and contribute to the school improvement plan. Parenting classes are offered during days and evenings. Teacher-made assessments are used to evaluate children through second grade. The school "has always been restructured". The staff are very involved in questioning and examining all aspects of the school.

Bonner County School District
Jane Stoll, Kindergarten Coordinator/Early Education Specialist
Sand Point, Idaho

In her second year with this position, Ms Stoll is the only education specialist in the state that is a Chapter 1 kindergarten consultant. In a district with 8 schools, she has contact with all kindergarten and first grade teachers on a biweekly basis, as well as providing numerous parent workshops and consulting with principals. Her goals include: 1) developing relationships with local preschools to observe children and assist pre-k teachers in making referrals; and 2) pursuing collaborative efforts to encourage professionals to work directly in the classroom with teachers and children in terms of co-teaching, co-planning, and using preschool teachers as team members. Ms. Stoll reports that the increasing number of at-risk children in the school system is generating more and more interest in preventive approaches. Educating parents, principals and kindergarten

teachers is having a mushrooming effect so that first grade teachers are being affected. The district is supporting a push towards restructuring for next year, and kindergarten teachers will be moving up to first grade in a restructured school in the fall.

Bonney Lake Elementary School
Sandy Anderson, Principal, Linda Norton, Kindergarten Teacher
Sumner, Washington

During the past year, this school has participated in spearheading an examination of early childhood practices and concerns throughout the district of 6 elementary schools. Two principals, including Sandy Anderson, organized a graduate level course and then formed an early childhood task force consisting of staff and parents from each school. This task force is assessing practices in the district and creating a vision leading to more appropriate curriculum implementation. Bonney Lake serves 630 students from pre-K (integrated special education preschool) through sixth grade in classrooms that are traditionally grouped and average 25 per class . A gradually upwardly mobile population feeds into the school and the parents are described as very supportive. The curriculum in the district has been adopted by district committees for the past ten years, and teachers at Bonney Lake look forward to site-based implementation of district established goals. Current goals for the early childhood project include: 1) creating a vision which will lead to a 3 to 5 year plan with specific goals; 2) presenting to children the most effective program based on research and experience; and 3) seeking alternatives to retention. The district is sponsoring site-based management training which has included teachers, paraprofessionals, specialists, and parents from the school.

Bozeman School District
Brian Dunn, Assistant Superintendent
Bozeman, Montana

Although the district is working with Billie Warford, an early childhood leader in the state, to establish a Head Start Center, Dr. Dunn describes the district as a supporter rather than a leader of efforts to promote early childhood concerns through the Head Start System. The school system is beginning to pursue extended care and other parameters of early childhood programs because of the increased needs demonstrated by children and parents in the district. The movement towards two-parent working families and increased numbers of single mothers at the poverty level were cited factors. Innovative programming in the district includes initiation of non-graded classrooms at the K-3 levels in one school, development of an "arts" school which may feature non-graded multiage groupings, breakfast and after-school programs in some sites, and a very successful mentoring program where identified "high-risk" children are paired with a role model from the community who visits and advocates for that individual child more than once a week. Dr. Dunn identified the goal of developing good quality before and after school care for all children who need it, as well as good quality day care for preschool children in need. Barriers to attainment of these goals include: (1) workloads -- Principals are overworked and do not have the resources to initiate and maintain additional programs; (2) facilities -- Sharing space between extended day and classroom teaching activities is difficult, as is finding and funding appropriate space in close proximity to the school grounds.

Most schools are overcrowded and have no additional space; and (3) funding -- No subsidized day care is available in the community, so that preschoolers at the poverty level have the least access to quality day care facilities.

Brattain Elementary School
Pat Bedore, Principal
Springfield, Oregon

Serving a diverse, low income and high-turnover (including homeless) population, this K-5 school of 275 students features extended school-community relationships and has restructured the Chapter 1 program as well as the staff supervision process. In her second year as principal, Pat Bedore describes her prior experience as kindergarten coordinator and participant in rewriting the state kindergarten guidelines as resources she has drawn on in responding to the needs of this school. Brattain has two classrooms at each elementary grade level and offers three half-day kindergarten sessions. Preschool programming is not connected with the school, but after school care is available through a partnership with the local county recreation program. The first grade teachers in this program have been developing their interest in whole language and are presenting professionally at the COSA conference. Second and third grade teachers are being encouraged to develop their interests and expertise in writing and thematic teaching, respectively, for the coming year. Goals for the program include: 1) eliminate grading practices for the third grade as they have already been for K-2; 2) eliminate ability groupings; 3) develop more integrated teaching methods with multiple content areas addressed by themes or units; and 4) institute a breakfast program. Many resources have assisted this school's progress, including the COSA conference and other training programs for staff, the willingness of teachers to take risks, the reassignment of the school to school-wide Chapter 1 status (allowing monies to be applied to all students and shifting staffing patterns), a grant for start-up of a breakfast program, and the work of the State Department of Education in exploring and promoting early childhood education and developmentally appropriate practices. Barriers or impediments include an 80% yearly student turnover rate described as a silent stress, the dissolution of the kindergarten curriculum committee, the high level of dysfunction of school families, lack of space (Brattain was designed to serve 150 students), district reliance on test scores as measures of school success, and occasional lack of syncronicity with district outlooks. Transition activities in which the school participates include kindergarten and first grade orientations and support of Safety Town, a summer program for four-year-olds sponsored by the Police Department. A small core group of parents sponsor PTA activities in partnership with staff and parents provide feedback into school processes. The school is very involved in a case management approach to child and family needs, initiating contacts with community resources as needs present. The school counselor works with families as well as individual students, and provides resource and referral services. Brattain is involved in a "key communicator" project which brought community resources together, including police, hospitals, business and community representatives to develop communication processes and goals for school communication needs. Local resources have come in to provide staff development and training around identified needs such as prevention of gang involvement and management of acting out behavior. Although not "officially" involved in restructuring efforts, the school does involve staff in all levels of decision making.

Carlton Elementary
Eleanor Bessonette, Assistant Principal
Carlton, Oregon

This Pre-K-8 school of 420 low income students in a rural community has successfully pursued a vision of early prevention/intervention over the past four years. During this time, with the support of the superintendent and eventual support of a cautious school board, they have initiated and expanded an on-site preschool program which now serves 65 children in four sessions from throughout the broader community and have received board approval for making the early childhood unit (pre-K-3) the focus of the intervention services available in the school. Resources which have enabled this achievement have included strong support from the superintendent, grant awards which funded start-up costs and salary support, and community support including advocacy for preschool services, tuition and donations. Barriers include funding sources and the need to convince the school board that preschool services were of benefit to the school as well as the community. Goals for the program include establishing classes for parents during session hours with day care services provided, serving Chapter 1 through preschool and kindergarten levels, and continuing the language-based curriculum. Carlton's staff have moved towards a developmental curriculum through the advocacy of the kindergarten/first grade teachers and through professional/in-service activities. The school communicates with parents through conferences, PTA sponsored meetings, school sponsored evening events, many phone conversations, monthly or weekly newsletters, and face-to-face interactions which have increased because the preschool program involves to the door delivery which brings parents into the building. Community activity includes adopt-a-class business partnerships, a "Future-Makers" business mentoring program for the older grades, and monthly reports to the chamber of commerce. Because there are no local social service agencies, referrals are handled by contacting county agencies such as Children's Services or Mental Health, or by direct referrals. The school counselor handles several family cases on site. Because Carlton is a single-site district, the school is already site-based in management style. Parents are informed, rather than participating very actively, in management decisions except at the preschool level. Ms. Bessonette reports that having the preschool program in the building has brought a whole new dimension to the school, by enabling staff and other students to see the developmental range of children's capabilities, helping children adjust earlier to the school environment, and improving children's progress in school.

Haines Elementary
Mary Asper, Restructuring Consultant
Haines, Alaska

This K-12 school of 400 students, located in a small logging and fishing community has a traditional school structure of grade-level classes with "overflow" combined 2/3, 3/4, and 5/6 classrooms and a strong commitment to a low ratio of 1 to 13 or 14 in the lower grades. It currently has little active specialization in early childhood practice and is focusing on a restructuring process working towards continuous improvement models which involve shifting from hierarchical to shared-decision-making processes. Parents, teachers, children and community members are being empowered to work on committees which will determine all aspects of school functioning. The early childhood committee is

working towards incorporating a preschool program on site. Other committees are working on integrated primary curriculum, parent involvement, and alternative forms of assessment.

Hathaway Elementary
Donna Brewer, Principal
Washougal, Washington

This K-2 school of 420 has implemented an experimental nongraded program for high-risk students during the past year. Described as a "school within a school" and named the PALS program (Personalized Accelerated Learning School), this project was conceived by the district's director of special services, Rick Wild, as an innovative opportunity to address the needs of high risk students through an intensive intervention program. School restructuring enabled a team of ten professionals, including math and reading specialists, three teachers, a special education specialist, a social worker and three assistants to work with 65 first and second graders identified by the school as most in need of intensive intervention in an ungraded setting. Resources supporting this effort included new directives allowing blending of categorical funds, an early intervention grant, Chapter 1 funds which pay for the social worker's salary, a state increase in the per child allocation, district-wide biweekly early release for staff, special training in the Reading Recovery Program, and the vision of Rick Wild. Current goals include: 1) close work with the 3-5 program which these children feed into to aid their transition; 2) "debriefing" and evaluation of the new program over the summer; and 3) more non-graded structures on "the other side" of the school. Barriers include limits to people's energy in dealing with massive change, reluctance of non-PAL staff to team teach, and struggles with parent involvement. Parents receive support through training and support activities funded through the PALS program and through the social worker on staff. Parents do not participate actively in decision-making, although "strong suggestions to move towards site-based management are coming from the superintendent". Although administered separately, day care, Head Start and ECEAP programs are housed on the campus and provide all entering kindergartners.

Helena Public Schools
Shirley DeVoe, Assistant Director of Special Education/Student Services
Helena, Montana

Having held this position for nineteen years, Ms. DeVoe has seen gradual change towards a program whose goal is to mainstream special needs preschoolers into the local Head Start program. The program has moved away from a self contained preschool handicapped program to a mainstreamed approach. Union with the Head Start program is the ultimate intention of the program. This effort was supported by attendance at the professional conference in Toronto which assisted the staff in "getting out of their rut" and truly supporting the concept of the "least restrictive environment". Barriers include schools and school teachers' reluctance to "own" this aspect and their desire to categorize such children as "a special education problem", rather than viewing their role as developing awareness of the needs of all children. Resistance to change "the way we've always done it" was also cited.

John Campbell Elementary School
Cindy Egan, Vice Principal
Selah, Washington

A very large (900 students) pre-kindergarten to grade two school in central Washington, this program has been moving toward implementing early childhood practice for the past four or five years. The campus includes four separate buildings which house a developmentally-delayed preschool, a tuition-based community sponsored preschool, a state-funded public preschool program for low income children, half-day kindergarten, and some non-graded elementary classrooms. Historically, the school supported "traditional", "semitraditional", and "progressive" curriculums in separate units. During the past five years, staff, including 25-year veteran teachers, have come to consensus on an integrated curriculum approach which emphasizes whole language and thematic, teacher-driven models. Current goals include: 1) development of the teaching staff as an advocacy body; 2) dissemination of teaching strategies; 3) reform of the evaluation and assessment of students; and 4) continuation of work with Central Washington College, which supports a year-long student placement program at the school. Resources include strong district support, the grant from the college, PTA support for special programs, and a grant for a summer boost program to assist parents. The school serves a primarily Caucasian population with a two-three percent migrant or ESL component and many students who qualify as high risk. Income levels range widely. Parents serve on advisory committees as well as in the classroom. Parent workshops are offered in addition to the summer boost program. A case management approach gives teachers release time on Fridays with a team of resource specialists. Two home visitors work full time for the program, and close ties are maintained with other community agencies. Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers, as well as supervisors, meet regularly to coordinate services and needs of preschoolers. The district is discussing restructuring but it hasn't directly impacted the school yet.

Kalispell School District 5
Russ Winters, Elementary Principal & Transition Representative
Kalispell, Montana

Kalispell is a community of 15-20,000 middle income Caucasians in a logging, farming, and tourist area. It has an academically-oriented, progressively technological curriculum and a high school rated among the top 50 nationally. Eight years ago, the Kalispell School District began to explore a developmental program between kindergarten and first grade tailored to children who were "not ready" for first grade. Based on materials, screening devices and training from the Gesell Institute, the district has instituted a readiness kindergarten and a pre-first grade which serve children judged to lag behind 6 months in their developmental maturity. These classes are smaller and have a different curriculum than the non-readiness kindergarten or first grade. No child is placed in both developmental classrooms, but placement in either room ensures that children spend three years to complete first grade. The program has been monitored. Current goals include: 1) refinement of the screening process to increase the diagnostic capabilities - some children identified as being "young" end up having other, remediable problems; and 2) reexamination of the curriculum to determine whether the prefirst classrooms are more effective than the readiness kindergartens. The district feels that this program has reduced

retentions and is positive for kindergarten and first grade teachers because the children who enter their classrooms are "ready to be there".

Lincoln McKinley School
Debbie Leeds, Kindergarten Teacher, Pat Henley, Principal
Haver, Montana

Lincoln McKinley is located in a low-income, agricultural community and serves primarily English speaking students, 30% of whom are Native American. The school includes a preschool special education program, a "language" kindergarten for incoming kindergartners screened as at risk for language delay and a transitional first grade program. It serves 365 children in grades K-5 in a traditional grade-level heterogeneously grouped structure. The district made a commitment to developmentally appropriate practice eight years ago. The school responded to this initiative and developed a literature based, whole language approach to curriculum in which teachers develop curriculum by committee. Goals for the early childhood program include: 1) development of a preschool which could serve at-risk children (so far no room is available); 2) increase in support services for at-risk children such as summer school and more early prevention techniques; 3) provision of home visitors (similar to Home Start); and 4) retention of a Native American counselor who made a significant impact on the Native American children in the program. The school is working on forms of parent involvement and support, development of portfolio types of assessment, staff in-service and sharing across grade levels.

Mary Harrison Primary School
Anital McClanahan, Principal
Toledo, Oregon

This small (250 student), rural, poverty-level K-2 school houses an Oregon pre-Kindergarten Program, the state-funded low income preschool, and has a school-wide Chapter 1 project. Most families served are Caucasian, with a small number of Hispanics and Native Americans. Seventy-five percent of the population is ranked at or below the poverty level. Ms. McClanahan came to the school three years ago and has worked with the staff to become more child centered. Through research reviews and self-study, in particular of NAEYC's standards, the staff have developed a "core values" document, a "vision" statement, and a philosophy. Staff have experimented with, monitored, and reevaluated practice. Goals identified for next year, subsumed under the intent of providing the best educational opportunities for the school's children, include: 1) become an ungraded primary (six teachers will begin next year); 2) continue refining a self-concept program (an adaptation of Positive Action); and 3) continue to pursue parent partnerships. An innovative program supporting teams of teachers for making home visits to each child's family has been implemented. Resources include strong district support, Chapter 1 monies, and internal support from the staff. Curriculum is thematic, learning-center based, and emphasizes cooperative learning groups. Parents staff a publication center where children take their writing to be typed and placed in book form so they can illustrate their work. Special service staff and all handicapped children are creating a "merge model" with integrated services. Transition activity includes inviting Head Start and private kindergarten students for visits, as well as third grade teachers. Parents participate in a booster club, attend informational/participatory evening meetings

at the school, and have a morning and evening informational coffee available to them once a month. The school works closely with social service agencies in the community and exercises leadership in a Community Core, involving all agencies which serve at-risk families. Teachers draw in community representatives to share expertise in the school, and displays of children's art work are changed monthly throughout the community. Staff are working toward identifying the specific aspects of children's progress which they would like to monitor and are developing assessment measures which would provide that information. The superintendent has a district-wide action plan for restructuring which includes individual school-centered opportunities for innovation.

Nez Perce Elementary
Cindy Albers, 2nd grade and Head Teacher
Nez Perce, Idaho

A K-6 school serving 106 students in an agricultural community of 500, Nez Perce has 4 Indian and the remainder white, primarily middle-class students. Children are grouped by grade level. The handful of preschoolers who are identified with special needs are transported to a neighboring community to attend Head Start twice weekly by the school, but no other preschool services are affiliated with the school. Staff are developing a whole-language, integrated curriculum approach spearheaded by attendance at a conference two years ago. School goals include 1) every child feels successful at his/her own level, and 2) being excited about and liking to come to school. Chapter 1 staff are entering classrooms and working in an integrated fashion with children. Some parents volunteer in the classroom, but 75% of mothers work, and community involvement is minimal.

Nome Elementary
Dave Newton, Principal
Nome, Alaska

A very isolated, K-6 school which serves 465 low S.E.S., primarily Eskimo students in 22 classrooms, Nome Elementary has been involved with Early Childhood training and school restructuring for the past two and a half years. School changes include representative, parent and teacher empowered decision-making, classroom practice change, movement of class structure towards combined groupings, and complete reorientation of parent programs and involvement. Goals for this year and next include: 1) development of assessment goals and a portfolio system; 2) expansion of the math program into more manipulative, concrete systems; and 3) increased involvement/communication with local preschools and day care programs. Transition programs are being implemented and community relations are strong. "We are the only school in the state that based itself on the NASBE concept, and for that we've gotten lots of attention...What makes us unique is taking a traditional entrenched staff and changing it to develop a strong early childhood force as a unit committed to getting better every year."

Oregon State Department of Education
Betty Massoni, Early Childhood Consultant
Salem, Oregon

Ms. Massoni has worked with the Department in several contexts over the past few years, including as a kindergarten specialist who assisted 50 districts in implementing kindergarten when it became mandated several years ago and for the past year and a half as a consultant to implement the self-study model for developmentally appropriate practice across diverse districts outside Portland. She identifies current trends as the encouragement of DAP in public schools accompanied by increasing interest in coordinating early childhood practice and programs with public schools, ungraded primaries (interest has been bolstered because of state legislation mandating work towards this), clarification of the relationship between program assumptions and mandates such as those of Chapter 1 and the TAG program and early childhood practice (including conflict inducing issues such as commitments to pull-out vs. in class service provision), and assessment methods and uses. Resources for progress include the work of Randy Hitz at the state level in promoting developmentally appropriate practice, state policy which mandated kindergarten provision, and state support of early childhood which is growing as the state opens new positions for oversight and coordination of early childhood programs. Barriers include special programs with conflicting policies (as with Chapter 1 and TAG), administrators who lack knowledge and a supportive viewpoint about child development, lack of child development training for teachers, standardized testing, and tradition. Ms. Massoni suggested that valuable future resources could include more early childhood specialist representation at the state level to enable the department to do proactive rather than simply reactive work in early childhood education. For example, the kindergarten guidelines should be translated into Spanish, collaborative work should be facilitated with Chapter 1 administration, and administrative connections and leadership should be fostered. She identified a hunger for early childhood resources and materials which needs to be filled.

Patrick Elementary
Bob Bowers, Principal
Gold Hill, Oregon

Immersed in the process of change, this K-5 school has moved the 6th grade to middle school, successfully written and implemented one 20/20 grant for staff development in cooperative practices and conflict resolution (reducing the referral rate 40% in the process) and has submitted another, restructured the schedule in very innovative ways, will provide contracted preschool and school-age care next year in conjunction with the YMCA, and is working to provide a Head Start program on site. Geared towards prevention of problems related to a high rate of low income, transient children and families, this program is experimenting with clustering transitions so that children spend less time moving from one place to another, grouping children in mixed age "families" with one stable staff member for lunch every day next year to reduce anxiety and support appropriate social skill acquisition, using the reorganized lunch period to afford planning time, particularly for the K-2 team, and providing some forefront "bottom-up" restructuring at the school and through a district elementary study committee which will examine all aspects of the program next year. Goals for next year include: 1) implement more cooperative learning practices; 2) learn more about and better understand child development, transfer this knowledge to improving

early intervention programming; 3) launch the family grouping lunches and experiment with a social skills program as one facet of it; 4) continue the pace of staff development through peer coaching and staff collaboration, regardless of whether the 20/20 grant is funded; and 5) continue the momentum the school has managed to develop. Resources assisting Patrick Elementary's progress have included the process of writing the 20/20 grants, district support for the program's uniqueness, resources from the principal's involvement in ASCD and from staff courses and professional development, and kindergarten teachers who are "movers and shakers". The only barrier described by Mr Bower was budget cutbacks which cause shifts in momentum and require the staff to maintain their own initiative.

Pocatello District Office
Julie Van Osdol, Kindergarten Coordinator
Pocatello, Idaho

Ms. Van Osdol began work with the district four years ago and feels that the district is in a "change mode", working towards developmentally appropriate practice. The publication of NAEYC's Developmentally Appropriate Practice served as a major impetus. She and the local Head Start director teach an early childhood course, for credit, in child development and developmentally appropriate practice. The NAEYC DAP book and the Idaho Kindergarten Guide have been supplied to every kindergarten teacher and these materials have been reviewed with all principals. Most impact so far has been on kindergarten teachers. Administration has been very supportive as has the local AEYC, which sponsors an annual conference. Goals for the district include: 1) moving into first grades to educate primary teachers and increase sharing; 2) development of alternative forms of child assessment; and 3) elimination of letter grades.

Ponderosa Elementary
Judy Evans, Principal
Billings, Montana

Characterized by staff commitment to developing a program that "teaches children rather than curriculum", Ponderosa is a Chapter 1 school serving 370 students from pre-K to 6th grade. This school serves a cross-section of the population: Native American, Afro-American, Hispanic, Asian, and Caucasian similar to percentages existing in the state. Located in a working class neighborhood, over 25% of the students qualify for free lunch and many are described as "at risk" School goals include: (1) developing a "global education" approach; (2) focus on language-centered activity based curriculum and (3) literally expanding children's horizons. Resources include strong staff commitment and professional competency, business partnerships, active parents, and a school district which lacks financial resources but supports initiative at the building level in planning staff development. Lack of space is cited as the chief barrier. A handicapped half day pre-k program and two developmentally appropriate kindergarten teachers support the early developmentally appropriate early childhood component, and the school encourages cross-class and multiage groupings, particularly during the "immersion" activities which are a hallmark at the school. Assessment techniques include observation and portfolios for children through second grade. Testing and letter grades are added for the older students. The district is working

towards development of a strategic plan for restructuring and parents are involved an advisory capacity concerning school decisions. Ponderosa's principal has been invited to participate on a National Action Force as one of fifteen people from 13 states to design a mentoring program for Future Farmers of America, a program sponsored by the Kellogg Foundation. Ponderosa received national acclaim as an exemplary school in the President's Blue Ribbon program in 1990.

Portland Public Schools
Rebecca Severeide, Early Childhood Specialist
Portland, Oregon

Portland has had a long-standing interest in early childhood programming since it began offering kindergarten classes in 1917, with universal access since the 1940's. The district has offered pre-kindergarten classes since 1965, and currently serves 1,800 preschool students through Head Start, Chapter 1, Oregon pre-kindergarten, and district funded options. Ms. Severeide reports a trend towards more developmental programs and integrated forms of curriculum throughout the region, with stronger child-centered foci, a high incidence of children attending preschool throughout the state, more common efforts on the part of school districts to apply for independent textbook adoption, professionalizing conferences sponsored by the Confederation of Oregon School Administrators (COSA), and supported by the Oregon Association for the Education of Young Children (OAEYC) and strong grass-roots representation of early childhood policy issues by OAEYC. Identified examples of progress include the increased use of the adoption process to incorporate developmentally appropriate materials, the serious concern among teachers that their contracts include more than one parent conference per year as well as raised concern about working with parents in general, and the recognition on the part of district personnel for the need to interface with child care agencies and representatives. Valuable resources in fostering these trends include the recognition across the country of the importance of early childhood by the political and business community, the impact of the High Scope Foundation and Perry Preschool Project findings, the development of curriculum trends including Math Their Way and whole language, the movement within the district towards mainstreaming and integrating special needs children and blending special with regular education services, information and training services offered through Portland State University, and the local network of advocates and experts in early childhood education. Barriers include conflicting policies and adherence to traditional ways of doing things: for example the state mandated K-12 textbook adoption for each subject area on a 6 year cycle while early childhood experts advised abolishing the textbook approach and promoting integrated curriculum. Another cited example is the lack of coordination between agencies which results in poor or no case management of child/family needs. The teacher's union acts as a barrier when it works to place teachers regardless of grade level expertise and promotes a standard evaluation form for all teachers from K-12. Ms. Severeide named the following as valuable or needed resources for continuing progress:

- state level support for teacher release time to support case management approaches, curriculum adaptations, and other teacher development functions;

- o resources to help second and third grade teachers integrate the new strands of curriculum recommendations into an understanding of a comprehensive classroom picture;
- o performance based assessment models, including portfolio management and gradual transition into standardized testing for third graders;
- o training in early childhood for school administrators as part of the certification and mentoring process; and
- o state certification in early childhood education improved class sizes.

Richmond Elementary
Kathy Bebe, Principal
Salem, Oregon

A K-6 Chapter 1 Schoolwide program with a very high turnover rate (last year 118 students left and 120 students entered the program in a three month period) and a bilingual Spanish program, Richmond Elementary is one of the top five poverty schools in the state and serves homeless children as well as families of residents in the state penitentiary. A core of staff with strong early childhood education and experience, including the principal, Chapter 1 counselor, and a kindergarten teacher, have worked on integrating developmentally appropriate practice in the school through the use of the self-study program developed by Rebecca Severeide in the Portland Public Schools. The K-2 team will complete this process next year, and the third grade teachers will begin it. Richmond has greatly expanded their parent program over the past three years and offers a wide array of innovative opportunities for family members to interact with the school, including a "Parent Staff Together" group which develops leadership and parenting skills, parent workshops on "Discipline with Love and Logic", volunteer work parties, newsletters, "Love Lunch and Learn" monthly activities in which parents lunch with children and stay for free workshops, a home/school telephone program, and regular monthly meetings with kindergarten parents. Participation in parent activities has increased almost tenfold over the past three years. Community involvement includes a local adopt a classroom program through Kiwanis, a buddy program staffed by the Oregon National Guard and volunteer participation from the Willamette Fraternity. Most interaction with social service agencies consists of crisis intervention because of the high and chronic level of need of children and families in the school. The school staff has no time for follow through or to develop collaborative relationships. Goals cited by the principal for the school include: 1) sending the other two members of the early childhood leadership team to a training session on the Parents as Teachers program to become trained facilitators in a birth through three program and pursuing implementation of this program; 2) continue pursuit of developmentally appropriate practice, parent involvement, and Discipline with Love and Logic programs; and 3) pursue using the Chapter 1 telecommunications project to augment the parent program. Resources for progress have included Chapter 1 funds, the Kiwanis Club, the Oregon LAC, the State Department of Education, and local business partners. Barriers include the critical needs of the population being served and the lack of administrative support from the district - this school has 60 staff members and needs an assistant principal.

Rosemond Weller Elementary
Mark Shellinger, Principal
Fairbanks, Alaska

Located in a rural setting 10 miles outside of Fairbanks, this K-6 school serves 697 children representing an unusually wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds. The majority are Caucasian and 20% are Alaskan natives as well as other minorities, including bilingual Asians. The school has been involved in restructuring through the state-supported project and has committed to shared decision-making which includes parents, students and staff, providing extended care services including a pilot extended day kindergarten and before and after school care, and working towards smaller class sizes (goal of 1:20). All staff participate in morning classes so that the ratio is lowered to 1:14. Current early childhood goals include: 1) expanding the number of elementary counselors from one to five, four for parent work, education and outreach; 2) lower class sizes in 2nd and 3rd grades; and 3) reexamine financial allocations throughout the district, where $600/child more is allocated at the high school than the elementary level. Classrooms are utilizing cross-curriculum, project oriented approaches and have been whole-language since 1983.

Sears Elementary
Jacki Imle, Principal
Kenai, Alaska

A K-2 "Early Childhood Unit" which also includes a preschool program for language-delayed or special needs children, this school of 475 includes 400 Caucasians and 75 Native, Pacific Island and Asians. Participants in a three-year state-sponsored early childhood pilot project, they have worked at team-building, parent involvement and support, and integration of special service staff into regular classroom activity. Goals this year include: 1) integration of developmentally appropriate practice and cultural relevance into the curriculum; 2) developing the school as an advocacy body; and 3) improving parent/community involvement. The school curriculum is based on a thematic approach aimed at "hands-on" opportunities for learning, learning centers, and exploration periods.

South Colby Elementary School
John Lindley, Principal
Port Orchard, Washington

This K-6 school of 445 primarily Caucasian, lower-middle to middle-income children in a semi-rural setting is in the third year of implementing age-appropriate developmental instruction. Impetus for the change in approach came from the school's concern that while it was doing an excellent job of teaching children skills, children were not becoming motivated to learn. Mr. Lindley's involvement with NAESP led to participation in a National Science Academy committee. He channeled information to staff who made the commitment to change. The school has received three consecutive state grants to examine and implement components for successful early childhood education. Current goals include: 1) deal with inhibitors (lack of district support, new mode of reporting progress to

parents, monitoring and reporting systems on a continuous program basis); 2) staff communication (helping staff to become less provincial and set priority of "sharing" children and concern for children); and 3) multiage groupings. Resources have included the state grants from the Superintendent of Public Instruction, support from the Association of Washington School Principals, and site-based management which enables the school to take textbook funds and apply to other curricular purposes. Classroom practices stress whole language, integrated theme teaching, child-initiated activity, and intra-staff communication. Classes are currently grouped by age level with cross-age tutoring in all classrooms. The number of referrals for special needs has been reduced, as have retentions and discipline problems while attendance is up, since efforts to change have been initiated. The school has an active PTA, the executive board of which serves as a sounding board for the principal. A parent coordinator trains and organizes volunteers, finds volunteer opportunities for working parents, and assists parents at incorporating their volunteer work into job resumes. Local business in this community is represented by only one lumberyard, and no social service agencies are located nearby. The school is using site-based management and involves teachers and all classified staff in decision-making and cooperative management across the school.

Tendoy Elementary
Judy Thomas, Principal
Pocatello, Idaho

Judy Thomas credits the 20 year veteran kindergarten teacher at Tendoy for spearheading a campaign to shift towards a more developmental program. Supported by Julie Van Osdol, the local AEYC, a district commitment to the Onward to Excellence Program, and the elementary coordinator, all of whom have provided resources, the school staff have moved to reexamine the retention policy, work towards early identification of at-risk children, and develop a more innovative reading program. Current goals for this K-6 school serving 380 students from an urban, middle to low income population include: 1) moving the first grade to a more developmental, less structured program; 2) developing an alternative to retentions; and 3) developing the manipulative component of the math program for the third, fourth and fifth grades. Barriers to progress include the local curriculum adoption process, and lack of time for teachers to develop alternative proposals. The school has close ties to the local Head Start and handicapped preschool programs and is attempting to involve them in the administrative council and local principals group. Tendoy works hard to ease the transition of children and families into the program. Parents volunteer and serve in advisory capacities in the school, have a drug education program available, and communicate with the school in a number of ways. Teachers are active in staff development activities which they share during extended meetings monthly. The school is involved in site-based management, but it remains challenging to discover which decisions <u>can</u> be made on-site.

Thirkill Elementary
Wayne Waddoups, Principal
Soda Springs, Idaho

This K-2 school, which serves 300 Caucasian children who are primarily middle-income, has had a handicapped preschool program for the past 4 years; several

split or two year classes; and is working towards increased staff training and improved child performance. Goals for next year include: 1) increased training for staff including release time every Monday afternoon; 2) an emphasis on reading and math success with each child; and 3) establishment of a positive school climate and enhancement of each child's self esteem. Program components include a traditional, academically structured curriculum, considerable parent involvement in assisting classroom activities, and special projects involving support from businesses and other grants for distance learning. Thirkill has minimal contacts with local preschool or community agencies, works closely with the Health Department and expresses a need for better social services.

Vaughn Elementary
Steve Aspden, Principal
Vaughn, Washington

Currently in the process of implementing an ungraded primary, Vaughn Elementary is a K-5 school serving 400 in a rural-bedroom community. The school offers half day kindergarten and houses an ECEAP and a parent cooperative preschool on site, although little interaction occurs between the programs. Vaughn will offer three classes for six-and seven-year-olds next year and one class for seven- and eight-year-olds. The kindergarten has not been integrated into the program because of staff efforts to protect the kindergarten curriculum from a push towards academics coming from parents in the community. Mr. Aspden credits the movement towards an ungraded primary as emanating from the school's involvement with whole language - change which is curriculum rather than style driven and which is integrative enough to allow teachers to adapt to a wider age range. Goals for next year include: 1) working towards becoming a totally ungraded school, including the third, fourth and fifth grades; 2) finding a way to provide planning time - a grant has been submitted to the district; and 3) continually monitoring the program, made more challenging since whole language approaches don't have built in levels as basals do. The school is working to move away from standardized tests and towards developing a portfolio system. Vaughn is in the process of restructuring as a result of the state mandated fourth year review of the school improvement plan. Cited resources include the province-wide adoption of whole language by British Columbia along with the training resources and classroom observations that system has afforded, materials and expertise available through ASCD, and teacher visits out of the building to observe "real" implementations. Barriers include teacher hesitancy and lack of knowledge, and the difficulty of having both traditional and ungraded approaches operating simultaneously in the school.

Walker Elementary
Pat Scalo, Teacher, Patty Wixon, Principal
Ashland, Oregon

Numerous and unique opportunities for mixed-age groupings characterize this small, college-town K-5 school of 370 children. Two mixed-age classrooms, one serving first through third graders and the other a fourth/fifth, have been in operation for eight years and are significantly staffed through parent commitment and volunteer hours. Parents must apply for admission to these classes. In addition, "continuation" classes in which the teacher moves up with the children

also in operation. All classrooms participate in cross-grade collaborations, as well. The school is initiating before and after school care next year "because the children were here" and offers a "Special Friends" program providing adult friends for children in need as well as parenting classes monthly. Goals include: 1) to provide the most developmentally appropriate learning experiences for each child; 2) to have an ungraded primary program; and 3) pursue the building mission of developing a caring community among the school, community, and world at large through active global awareness projects. Resources include strong staff involvement and commitment, an Oregon Arts Commission grant, government funds for free breakfast and lunch programs, and strong district support. Parents are actively involved in nearly every aspect of school functioning, and Walker has several innovative community projects including collaborative efforts with a local nursing home and the U.S. Forest Service. Global projects include an art exchange with students in China and pen pal friendships with Russian students. School staff participate in local AEYC activities and have strong relationships with other early childhood providers in the community. "Constantly evaluating", the staff collect evaluative data from a wide variety of sources, including portfolios, standardized tests, state assessments, anecdotal records, and frequent surveys of students, parents, and community. Walker has been involved in building-based management for over three years.

Washington Office of State Superintendent of Public Instruction
Mary Carr, Early Childhood Specialist
Olympia, Washington 98504

Mary Carr has held her position for the past year and a half. She is actively promoting developmentally appropriate practice statewide and seeking to assist the state office to "catch up" to the districts and provide leadership in early childhood. Her position interfaces with early childhood policy personnel in other state agencies. The state has developed a voluntary preschool accreditation process similar to the NAEYC accreditation, except that it requires certification with an early childhood endorsement. The Washington package is being field tested this year. Several work groups have been formed to study issues facing early childhood in Washington, including one to develop a two year on-the-job program for publicly funded preschool programs and another to investigate ways that local education programs can help Headstart/ECEAP meet shortages in trained staff, transportation and facilities. Ms. Carr acts as a resource for school administrators on child care and early childhood education issues. She represents the Superintendent of Public Instruction on several state and national committees and belongs to the Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education. Ms. Carr meets with all superintendents in the state to create more informed visions of early childhood policy and practice, works closely with the Washington Education Association, has gained support from the union to target the 2 year degree, and works with the Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education organization.

Wilcox Elementary
John Liday, Principal
Pocatello, Idaho

A larger K-6 program which serves 750 middle and low-income children, this school groups children heterogeneously into grade level classes. Few children in this school qualify as "high risk". Goals include: 1) moving away from the academic approach to encourage the development of thinking and social skills; and 2) working towards a non-graded primary. District sponsored courses and various in-services are used to encourage the staff on this path. Some transition activities are in place, and parents are very actively involved in the school, both volunteering in classroom activities and in decision-making processes. Orelda Foods has just become the school's corporate partner, and the school works closely with the Health and Welfare Departments around student needs. The district is working towards piloting a criterion-referenced, district generated test so that the ITBS, used from 2nd grade, can be dropped.

REFERENCES

Bredekamp, S. (Ed.) (1987) *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children From Birth Through Age 8*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Child, Family, and Community Program. (1991) "Integration of Education and Human Services: A Research Synthesis." Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

Committee for Economic Development. (1991) *The Unfinished Agenda: A New Vision for Child Development and Education*. New York, NY: Committee for Economic Development.

Conklin, N.F., & Olson, T.A. (1988) "Toward more effective education for poor, minority students in rural areas: What the research suggests." Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

Conklin, N.F., Hunt, C., & Walkush, L. (1990) "Language development: A base for educational policy planning." Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

Cotton, K. & Conklin, N.F. (1988) "Topical Synthesis: Research on Early Childhood Education". Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

David, J., et al. (1990) *State Actions to Restructure Schools: First Steps*. Washington, DC: National Governors' Association.

Demmert, W. (1989) *Rethinking and Restructuring Alaska's Primary Schools: Kindergarten Through Fourth Grade*. Juneau, AK: Alaska Department of Education.

Galinsky, E. (1989) *The Cost of Not Providing Quality Early Childhood Programs*. New York, NY: Bank Street College of Education, Work and Family Life Studies.

Gnezda, M., & Smith, S. (1989) *Child Care and Early Childhood Education Policy: A Legislator's Guide*. Washington, DC: National Conference of State Legislators.

Governor's Interim Commission on Children and Youth. (1988) *Our Greatest Resource: Investing in the Future of Alaska's Children*. Juneau, AK: Office of the Governor.

Kagan, S. (1990) *Policy Perspectives: Excellence in Early Education: Defining Characteristics and Next Decade Strategies*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Kunesh, L., & Bakker, J. (1990) "Parent Involvement in School Restructuring: A National Perspective." *NCREL Policy Briefs*, Special Issue. (9).

Melaville, A. & Blank, M. (1991) *Structuring Interagency Partnerships to Connect Children and Families with Comprehensive Services*. Washington, DC: The Institute for Educational Leadership.

Morrison, J., et al. (1990) "Getting Children Off to a Strong Start in Preschool." *The Executive Educator*. (12)12, p. 23-24.

National Association of Elementary School Principals. (1990) *Standards for Quality Programs for Young Children: Early Childhood Education and the Elementary School Principal*. Alexandria, VA: National Association of Elementary School Principals.

National Association of State Boards of Education (1988) *Right From the Start: The Report of the NASBE Task Force on Early Childhood Education*. Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Boards of Education.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (1990) "Educational Needs in the Northwest and Pacific: 1989 Annual Report." Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

Phillips, D. A. (Ed.) (1987) "Quality in Child Care: What Does Research Tell Us?" Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Schorr, L. (1988) *Within Our Reach: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage*. New York, NY: Anchor Press.

U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (1990) *Developing an Action Plan for Partnerships between Head Start and Public Schools*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (1987) *Easing the Transition from Preschool to Kindergarten: A Guide for Early Childhood Teachers and Administrators*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Virginia Education Association and Appalachia Educational Laboratory. (1990) *Teaching Combined Grade Classes: Real Problems and Promising Practices*. Washington, DC: Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education.

Weikart, D. (1989) *Quality Preschool Programs: A Long-Term Social Investment*. New York, NY: Ford Foundation.